

authors decided to cut corners by barring 3.9 million seniors living at or near poverty from receiving low-income prescription drug assistance.

Under the deal described this week-end, a senior earning \$8,000 a year may still be required to pay as much as \$2,500 to \$3,500 for coverage. That is not protection, Mr. Speaker. It is a cruel joke.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MILLER of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### FALSE PROMISE FOR AMERICA'S SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, after years of talk about the need to help our seniors with the high cost of prescription drugs, it appears that sometime this week, or perhaps this weekend, this Congress will be voting. They will be voting on a bill that is nothing more than a false hope and a false promise for America's seniors. In fact, Max Richmond, the head of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, a nonpartisan, not bipartisan, but a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization, has been quoted as saying, "Have you ever heard of Medicare fraud? Well, this Republican prescription drug bill is Medicare fraud."

Let me tell you why. As I see it, there are three major problems with the bill. Problem number one: the Republican leadership actually had the nerve to put language in the bill that says the Federal Government shall be prohibited from negotiating with the big drug manufacturers to bring down the high cost of medicine. That is in the bill. Then they call it a seniors bill.

Problem number two is the prescription drug plan will be privatized. And what is worse than that is the rest of Medicare could very well be privatized

by 2010 under this bill. Insurance is about spreading the risk. When our homeowners policy comes due, sure, we complain; but when you think about the fact that they will replace everything in our house and build us a new house if something happens, it is fairly reasonable, the premium we pay. And why is that? When is the last time you saw a home in your neighborhood burn down or get blown away? It does not happen very often. Insurance is about spreading the risk.

Well, with seniors there is no risk to spread. Seniors require a lot of medicine and a lot of health care to either get well or to stay healthy. That is why we created Medicare 38 years ago.

So why do the Republican leadership and the big drug manufacturers want to privatize the Medicare prescription drug benefit? Well, let me tell you why. You hear about how prescription drugs are less expensive in other countries. It is true. I did a survey about a year ago where I compared the price paid by seniors of the five most commonly used brand-name drugs in my district with seven other countries. And guess what we found: seniors in my district pay on average 110 percent more than seniors in these other countries.

Now, why is that? Because America is the only industrialized Nation in the world where people go without health insurance; 43.6 million of them today, 10 million of them are children and the rest of them, for the most part, are people that are trying to do the right thing and work jobs, but they are working the jobs with no benefits.

In other countries everybody has health care. And in other countries they tell the big drug manufacturers if you want your medicine, your brand in our country, you are going to give us a discount. And they do. And the drug manufacturers and the Republican leadership know good and well that if we have 40 million seniors under one plan in America, that we too will demand those kinds of discounts to help offset the cost of this program.

So they want to privatize the plan and spread seniors out over about 100 plans and have 100 different insurance companies knocking on your door and calling and sending mail to your mother or dad or grandfather or grandmother all trying to sell them, what? Exactly the same plan. Privatization will not work.

The third big problem with this is it is not really a meaningful benefit. Most people who are fortunate enough to have a private health insurance company, and every plan is a little different, but most people who are fortunate to have private health insurance, well, the first \$3,500 worth of medicine they pay about \$700 out of pocket. Under this Republican prescription drug plan, on the first \$3,500 worth of medicine, seniors are going to get stuck with \$2,600 of it. All this talk in Washington amounts to \$900 worth of help on the first \$3,500 worth of medicine.

You see, it is going to have a \$250 deductible. And during that time, you have got to pay the monthly premium, which they say may be \$35; but they are not real sure what it will be, it could be more. And then after \$250 up to \$2,000, Medicare is going to pay 80 percent and you pay 20 percent. That sounds pretty good. But on a \$100 prescription, once you get to the \$250 mark and you are paying \$20, what happens when you hit \$2,000? All the way up to \$3,500 you are back paying the full \$100. Medicare pays nothing. But they still bill you monthly for this premium. This is Medicare fraud. It is wrong. This is America, and we can do better than that by our seniors.

□ 2045

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEUGEBAUER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. COBLE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG MARKET ACCESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I will not take the whole 5 minutes. I have been listening to the discussions about Medicare reforms, and I must tell my colleagues that some of the arguments they are making on the other side, I agree with. Some of them, I do not agree with.

I do want to let Members know that in first hour there will be a special order, and I invite Members from the Republican and Democrat and Independent parties to join us tonight and talk about the issue of market access because I think that is one thing that most Members here in the House agree on, and that is, that Americans deserve to have world class prices for world class drugs.

As the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) was just saying, in the studies that he has done, in the studies that I have done, the studies that other Americans have done, that have been done by the press and other groups, they all come to the same conclusion; and that is that Americans pay by far and away the world's highest prices,